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HALL IMPROVEMENT.

THE third illustration, offering suggestion for improvement in the existing methods of hall arrangement and disposal of staircases in the ordinary city house, is shown upon this page, and makes a very neat provision for conservatory and other desirable accessories to even a small house.

The plan shows the staircase at the back, by curtailing the back rooms on the ground and second floor some three feet; but this space can be recovered by building the bay as in Design for Hall Number two, in our last issue. A very handsome hall and staircase can be thus made, the hall being six feet in width the whole length, and looking into the conservatory at the end. This staircase is not continued above the first floor, being ceiled over at that level, which will greatly add to the value of the staircase, and give a spacious arched landing. A second staircase is provided between the front and back rooms on this floor, cupboards and recess for bed being formed under the soffit. By this means, the space which would be occupied by an unnecessarily large staircase from this floor is given to the rooms on the second floor.

THE DINING ROOM.

BY MARY GAY HUMPHREYS.

CONSIDERING the important place which eating and drinking take in our lives, it is rather surprising that in fact the dining room is one of the latest distinct departments in the household. English literature abounds in proofs of this, and traces the growth of the dining room, which at one time was regarded as an odious class distinction. An early English bishop commanded the nobles and gentry to eat in the hall with their household. Piers Plowman complains that "In the halle the lord nor the lady lyketh not to sitte, nor hath eche syche a rule to eaten by himselfe in a privee parlour;" and, in 1526, an edict of court includes, among other things not to its liking, that "sundree noblemen, gentlemen, and others doe much delight to dyne in corners and secrete places." Mr. G. W. Robinson, that indefatigable collector of old household customs, states that the word dining room never found a place in the dictionaries until Johnson added it.

The modern dining room is essentially English, and grows out of the Englishman's love of privacy, and the pleasures of the table and bottle. The Italian, German and Frenchman take more kindly to *al fresco* life, and dine with as much contentment in restaurant, garden, or on the pavement. To the Englishman and to the American the dining room is the center of home, and the table is the altar on which is erected the lares and penates of domestic life. This position of the dining room, with respect to the other divisions of the home, at once gives it certain characteristics.

The first of these is size. There is but one other room, the drawing-room, which ranks it in this respect. Proportionately, the dining should be as great, since it must be capable of entertaining the same number of people when the hospitalities of the drawing room are called into use, the only difference being that the space is better economized. The dining rooms in some of the more recently built houses in New York are baronial in size. One of these accommodates a table thirty-three feet in length. On opposite sides are two immense chimney-pieces and fire-places, in which logs six feet long are kept burning. In heights of entertainment, with liveried servants moving deftly around gaily dressed men and women, and musicians discreetly screened to enliven, but not destroy, the conversation around the board, the scene is not unlike some old feudal picture.

Most people, however, are forced to content themselves with smaller dimensions and less picturesque conditions; but this does not interfere with the equally appropriate expression of the dining room as the center of home life, and not as merely the family eating place.

The shape of the dining room is of importance in reference to the general economy of room in the

subdivision of the house. The most common shape, especially within the dimensions to which city houses are limited, is oblong. The circular table, which is now generally preferred, requires a square room, but its use will be necessarily limited, since the square room is so often impossible. The formality of the oblong room is often broken by cutting off the corners into ornamental cupboards, although formality, from reasons which will hereafter appear, is not a disagreeable essential of the dining room. Some of the most beautiful of oblong modern dining rooms are varied by making an alcove of one end, in which the fireplace is made. One of the smaller dining rooms of the Union League Club is a fine sample of the alcove room. In the middle is the fireplace, and extending on

dining rooms the fireplace itself makes an alcove. This is a recent adaptation of the ingle-nook. The fireplace may be only a tiled recess in which a basket-grate is set. Above this is built the mantel with its shelves, and still above a cove which is framed by an arch supported on pillars, and enclosed on each side a small settle. The space above the settle and between the mantel and the wall is also shelved and offers a place for the convenient books which make every room a place for beguiling time profitably. The cove above the fireplace offers a fine opportunity for decoration, either in fresco, canvas or with stamped leather. And here occurs to mind a beautiful example of painting on leather for such a cove in a dining room filled with colonial Dutch furniture. The leather had been previously gilded and over this was painted in oils a Dutch canal scene with lazy boats, peaked red tiled roofs, and the suggestion of a sunset in early spring, making a beautiful combination of reds and greens through which the underlying gold gleamed.

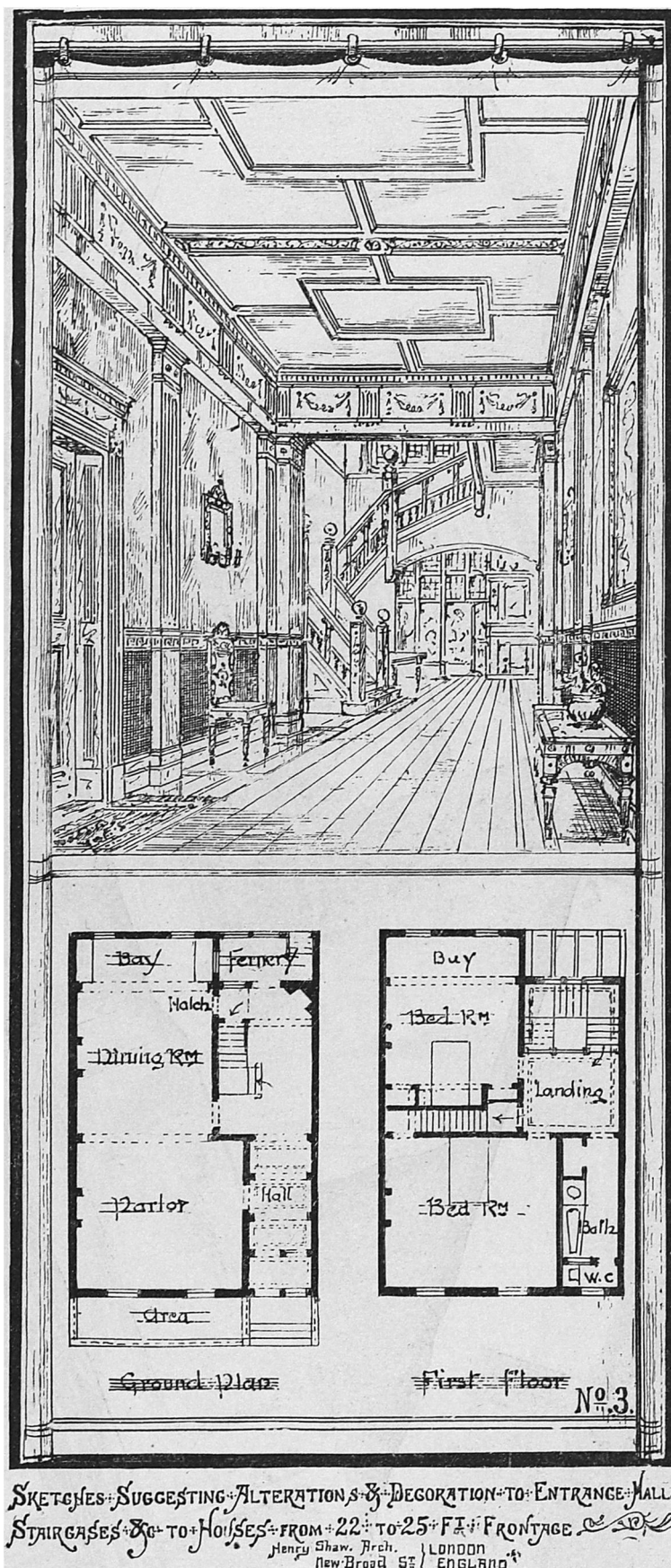
The cabinet features of the modern mantel-piece, too popular now to need urging, is in fact a revival. As far back as the time of Edward IV. mantel-pieces were constructed with work for special and cherished objects, and in many of the old New England houses, a sort of cupboard is constructed in the mantel. The mantel may with but little attention do some part of the service of the buffet and cupboard, or be adapted to some peculiar taste of the master or mistress of the house. For example, one side may make a case for guns, and another for swords and smaller arms.

The most attractive dining room fireplace I have seen was placed in a tiled alcove. The chimney piece was built out, the fire receptacle being lined with hammered tiles, and had at the back a brass pattern of interesting design. Above the fireplace the mantel was divided into regular compartments about three feet high, and from this height sloped back like a tiled roof to the wall, above which ran the cornice. On each side still in the alcove were two windows and a settle, one window being behind the settle, where the winter landscape might be enjoyed in contrast with the blazing fire. The upper panes of these windows were filled with amber, rose, blue and green glass.

Within the room again on each side of the alcove were large cabinet-like cupboards extending down to the wainscoting, a row of drawers beneath, and a shelf with molding extending still below, taking the place of side tables. These, with the fireplace, made one side of the dining room, accomplishing more in little space and with greater beauty than anything of this kind I have ever seen.

It is desirable to use as much wood as possible in a dining room. Wood is not only commended for its durability, a reason which any one will appreciate, but for its color. Oak, walnut, mahogany, cherry or whatever may be the wood chosen, is more exquisite in effect than anything that can be produced by paint or other means. In many of the old Virginia mansions cherry wainscoting is carried high up the walls. In the days when servants were numerous this was kept highly polished, since that time, although rarely touched, it remains warm, glowing and as richly toned as mahogany. No matter how simply laid on, wainscoting of wood is preferable to anything else. Where expense is not a question of great consideration it is used, and if an alcove is introduced it is panelled throughout. In some of the more

recent and stately dining rooms the wood is carried on to the ceiling. And as an instance of the most lavish embellishment of this sort, is a dining room whose ceiling is laid in panels of old oak. The centers of these panels are, for the most part, mythological figures carved from models made by one of the foremost sculptors in this country, and overlaid and mingled with Sienna marble, serpentine, pearl, ivory and coral. These are enclosed in a leaf molding of a sort of bronze composition, and finished with an egg and dart molding in old oak. These panels surround a skylight of stained glass, which completes one of the finest pieces of work done in this country. The lighting of dining rooms from the roof makes a very beautiful room, and is often adapted to conditions which would otherwise be impossible. One of the



each side to the limits of the alcove is a settle panelled in cherry. The alcove always implies the fireplace or grate. As the hall, so the dining room wants character when deprived of the open fire; for fire, as food, at least in northern climates, is associated with those ideas which the dining room should express. The mother of a large family, suddenly plunged from great wealth to great poverty, tells me that when an extra fire became a matter of great solicitude, she made a point of having a fire always burning in the dining room, although it was otherwise supplied with heat, because she realized what cheer it gave her family hurrying to early and unwonted breakfast hours, and how its glow rewarded days of late toil when they gathered home in the evening, since the table was their almost only reunions. In many modern English

most unique dining rooms is thus made in a house built against the side of a steep hill. The room is in the rear of the house and placed between a library and kitchen, allowing the only window where it would be useless—that is directly against the hill behind. The dining room is on the contrary lighted south and north by small panels of glass ranged, like a frieze, beneath the ceiling and with most interesting results.

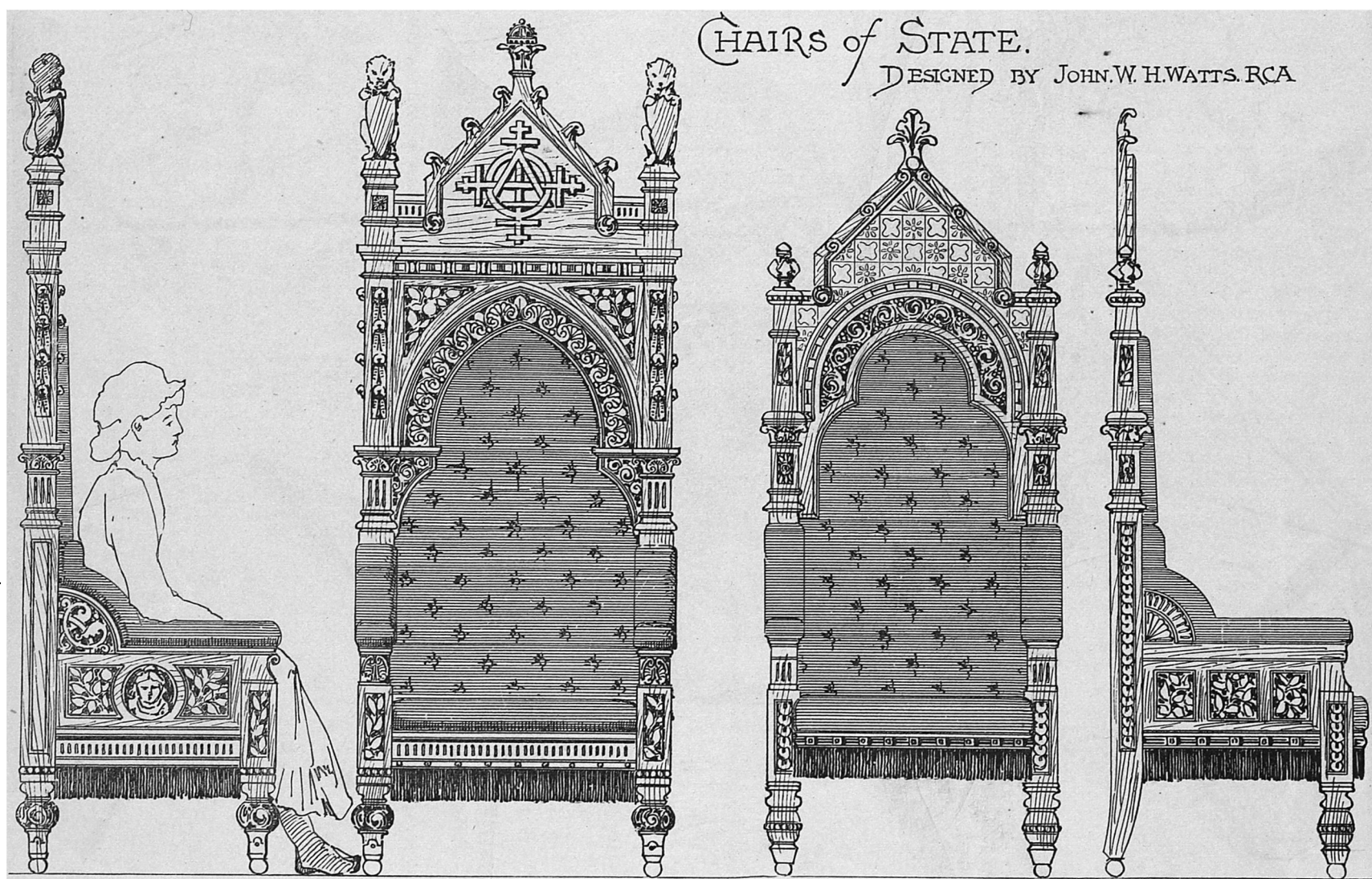
To return to color, the very idea of the dining room is at once associated with opulent colors, and it is but repeating an axiom to say that rich color is always identified with two tones. Instinct would prevent any one from fitting out a dining room in pale blues, pinks or grays, while on the contrary warm reds, greens, browns and possibly a deep blue of warm tone are as readily chosen. The color of the wood offers the first suggestion of the proper tint. Red, a warm Venetian red, not the colder Indian red, is the easiest color to combine with the woods in general use. It is not quite as well to repeat the tint of the wood in carpets or draperies. For example, with mahogany or cherry rich golden browns are in harmonious contrast; and from these brown it is easier to wander into other colors, reds, yellows, olives or blues, and gives that pleasant variety which prevents rooms from becoming monotonous; with oak, on the other hand, the starting point

a sort of agreeable violet tone. These are only suggestions which can be modified many ways to suit the decorative scheme chosen.

The hanging of walls with stuffs is also to be considered. Those fortunate people who possess old tapestries find no place more suitable to hang them than in the dining rooms. Stuffs, however, are not confined to these, and those people whose purses are unlimited. One gentleman has his dining room with a dark, pleasant-toned jute, which he says destroys the clatter of conversation at dinner, as well as being agreeable to the eye. The beauty of many Japanese materials that can be used for this purpose is only beginning to be appreciated. These stuffs, which are cotton, with all over designs, chiefly in gilt, and gilt mingled with color, come in ten-yard pieces, and make most effective as well as seasonable wall hangings, since their cost is but little in the first place, and they require nothing of the paper hanger or upholsterer than to be tacked to the walls with gilt nails. In such hangings it is to be also remembered that the precision and joining of edges required in paper hanging is altogether unnecessary. With these stuffs gilt molding is used under the cornice; or, greater variety is given the wall, if the regular divisions into dado, field and frieze are made, by using another pattern and running it lengthwise underneath the ceiling and separated

and handcraft, deserves more attention at the hands of those who can spare time, and bring to its study some healthy interest and a love for their theme.

Cornish history is, of course, deficient in sundry matters in which Ireland is well represented; but good reasons can be assigned for these deficiencies, when the peculiar circumstances of the Cornish Celts through long centuries are taken into account. Ireland has a wealth of varied Celtic literature in the vernacular; but Cornish literature, in the Cornish language, is very sparse. Among other matters, Ireland can show superb ornamentation or illumination in connection with her MS. materials, the work of her native ecclesiastics, scribes, and genealogists, written centuries ago. Cornish history and language is almost a blank in these fields, though in other Celtic doings fairly represented. Here is an extract from a distinguished English architect and writer upon ornamental design, Mr. M. Digby Wyatt, which is both interesting and suggestive; but many other passages could be quoted on the same subject from the works of English and Continental critics, respecting early Irish art and artists: "We freely confess, in the practice of art at least, they (the Irish) appear in advance, both in mechanical execution and originality of design, of all Europe, and the Anglo-Saxons in particular. . . . In close connection with this (the Irish) church existed a school of art remarkable for its sense of the graceful and grotesque, and for its superiority, in point of ornamental design, to any other style of the same period. That its influence extended much further than is generally supposed would appear certain; and not only did Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, the North of England, and Scandinavia, adopt its peculiar system of ornament, but some of the most celebrated illuminated



A SERIES OF SUGGESTIONS FOR CHAIRS. NUMBER THREE.

from the floor may be red, with which blue may be judiciously mingled. Walnut suggests warm blues mingled with reds, such as one gets in Persian carpets.

The side walls take their tone from this keynote, set by the carpet or floor covering. Beyond furnishing color in harmony with the other decorations, the walls of a dining room should claim nothing in themselves. No matter how expensive the wall covering is, whether of wall paper or stamped leather this holds good, for properly they are nothing but a background. The only exception to this is where the ornamentation becomes one with the background, as has been recently seen. In this case the walls are overlaid with gilded canvas, and this has received allegorical figures in oil, which of course does away all other ornamentation of the walls.

There are several simpler methods of treating dining room walls aside from wall papers, which are of course offered of every sort, and of every price. One of these is applying thick paint on the plaster and showing heavy brush marks, which are applied so as to allow as great play of light and shade as possible, over this is stenciled some designs in dull gilt. Another is the smooth plaster surface painted in oils and stenciled in some small all over pattern of a contrasting color, as bright red stencilled with blue producing

from the field by a small gilt molding as a frieze or border.

The question of furniture, draperies and ornaments offers so wide a field that their consideration will be left for another article.

CELTIC DECORATION.

In wood as well as in stone, the old Cornish joiners and carvers evidenced considerable skill in the old wood-work fittings and furnishings of their churches and county mansions. There is much grotesque profuseness of surface ornamentation in the Cornish wood-work of the sixteenth century, and of a later date. These old Cornish wood-carvers and joiners were indeed most comical fellows, for they liked to crack jokes through their embodied workmanship, and, no doubt, prelate and pastor, lord and commoner, friend and enemy, village droll and knave, were made to supply subjects, and were, under thin disguises, perpetuated on panelings and other surfaces, "without permission." This addition to surface ornamentation on the part of the old Cornish artists and craftsmen was characteristic also of the Irish craftsmen of early times. Indeed, it may be traced in Ireland back to Pre-Christian days, in the underground chambers connected with more than one class of prehistoric dwellings and their appendages. We cannot here go into details respecting other features in Cornish art and handcraft, civil and ecclesiastical, showing similar characteristics to those in Ireland, though exhibiting in some respects marked differences in details. The subject, however, of early Celtic Cornish art and handcraft, and Irish Celtic art

works in the various libraries of Europe are now discovered to have emanated from this school." Good art-work is thus credited to the Celts from the fifth to the end of the eighth century, at a time when the fine arts were, almost extinct in Italy, and in other parts of the Continent. The "graceful and grotesque" in wood and stone was evidenced at a later period, too, by Irish craftsmen and their Cornish kindred.—*Irish Builder*.

THE Naples correspondent of the *American Register* (Paris) says, in speaking of the Hotel Vesuve of his city: This hotel possesses a peculiarity unknown to any other hotel in Italy. The entries, the halls, the drawing-rooms, dining and reading-rooms, and the grand staircase, are all decorated in the most thorough Pompeian style. I have seen, in various parts of Europe, many rooms decorated in the style of the Romans of eighteen hundred years ago, but I have never seen any which have carried out so consistently and so beautifully the Pompeian decoration. Those who have seen the Pompeian house in the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, constructed on the plans drawn by the late Owen Jones, have been disappointed in the effect, although the proportions are most accurate. My opinion is, that the true effect of lightness and airiness has been lost by the want of sunlight. The huge Crystal Palace, while admitting plenty of light in its grand corridors, does not permit a sufficient quantity to enter the minor buildings under its vast roof, to produce the real effect of an original Pompeian edifice, which was situated in the sunniest region of Italy. The Hotel Vesuve has not only the true decorations, but has plenty of sunlight, and thus presents a better reproduction of a Pompeian edifice than I have ever seen elsewhere.